Web alert

Show me the money

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Finding funding is becoming an increasing problem for researchers, particularly graduate students, postdocs and junior faculty members, as competition for dwindling resources is fierce. Increasingly, the web can be used to find organizations that provide funding; at some web sites, you can find the forms and all the information necessary to start you off on the application procedure.

Many university web sites offer advice for finding and obtaining grants. For example, the University of Wisconsin–Madison's 'Grants Information Center' (http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/Memorial/grants/intnet.htm), provides a detailed guide to grants resources on the internet.

The Society of Research Administrator's Grantsweb (http://web.fie.com/cws/sra/resource.htm) contains links to both US and international Government resources and private resources. A list of links to grant application forms available on the web is also provided. For private funding, the Foundation Center Grantmaker Information site includes an annotated list of private foundations with links to their home pages (http://fdncenter.org/grantmaker/contents.html). Among those private foundations, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (http://www.hhmi.org/) has teamed up with the American Association for the Advancement of Science to provide Grantsnet, launched earlier this year (http://www.grantsnet.org/). The searchable database of biomedical funding opportunities requires that you register before use, but you can look at 'Funding News' to find out about any new grants or changes to existing grants without registering. Another private foundation, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund (http://www.bwfund.org/index.html), has an initiative to encourage the interdisciplinary training of graduates and postdocs from the physical, chemical, and computational sciences so they can better apply their unique knowledge to biological problems. Application cover sheets for all of the competitive award programs can be downloaded.

For those looking for US Federal funding, an obvious place to visit is the extensive National Institutes of Health (NIH) Funding Opportunities site (http://www.nih.gov/grants/). This searchable site provides information on NIH grant and fellowship programs, and contains a potentially useful page of answers to frequently asked questions. The NIH forms can be downloaded in pdf format.

Another Federal US site is the National Science Foundation (NSF) (http://www.nsf.gov/home/grants.htm). Similar to the NIH awards, most NSF grant proposal forms are available electronically, along with hints on their use, and answers to frequently asked questions. Information about research projects that NSF has funded recently can be found by searching the Awards Database. The information includes abstracts, and the names and locations of principal investigators. Both completed and in-process research are described.

For information on funding in Canada, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council has a well-organized site (http://www.nserc.ca/). Again, all the information for the application procedure is available, including forms that can be filled out on screen. Some anecdotal success stories are also described.

Looking for funding in Europe might lead you to the European Molecular Biology Organization Fellowships site (http://www.embl-heidelberg.de/ExternalInfo/embo/Fellow_Info.html). Here, you can find guidelines and help notes on the application procedure, and downloadable versions of the forms required for both the application and subsequent referee evaluation. The provisional results of the most recent selection procedure are also posted on the web, identified by a reference number.

Another useful site in the quest for funding in Europe is the Networks of Excellence Information Service (http://www-uk.research.ec.org/index.html). Here, you can find links to European Union sources of funding, national funding resources in European countries, including Italy, France and the UK, and other sources of funding for collaborative research, such as the NATO Science Programme (http://www.nato.int/science/).

The site for the Wellcome Trust, a UK charity that provides funds to support biomedical research, might also be useful (http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/). Booklets describing the Trust's biomedical funding programmes can be downloaded. The trust also runs the searchable WISDOM database (http://wisdom.wellcome.ac.uk/) which catalogues biomedical funding schemes run by the Wellcome Trust and other organizations in the UK.

Finally, if you need a few tips on how to write your grant application, some of the sites already mentioned include links to appropriate web sites or provide some help themselves. For example, the Foundation Center has a short course inproposal writing (http://fdncenter.org/onlib/prop.html), which might be useful for beginners. Amongst the advice is the recommendation that 'short, concise information captures the reader's attention' — a cue to finish.